

Bureau of Land Management
Northeast California Resource Advisory Council

Regular Meeting
July 9, 2010
Susanville, California

Chair Nancy Huffman opened the meeting at about 10 a.m.

Attendance

Category one: John Erquiaga, Ken McGarva, Todd Swickard, Jack Razzeto. Absent: Skip Willmore

Category two: Rosalee Bradley, Frank Bayham, Gale Dupree, Martin Balding, Alan Cain

Category three: Norvie Enns, Sean Curtis, Nancy Huffman. Absent: Pete Neely, Jim Chapman

There is a quorum

BLM Staff: Northern California District Manager Nancy Haug, Alturas Field Manager Tim Burke, Eagle Lake Field Manager Dayne Barron, Surprise Field Office Geologist Ken Collum (will be acting Eagle Lake Field Manager, District Public Affairs Officer Jeff Fontana.

Twin Peaks Wild Horse and Burro Gather Decision

Dayne Barron noted that the BLM Eagle Lake Field Office has issued a decision to gather excess wild horses from the Twin Peaks Herd Management Area. A news release and fact sheet were distributed. The gather will begin in early August and continue for five to six weeks. The goal is the return wild horse and burro herds to their appropriate management levels.

State Director's Report

District Manager Nancy Haug reported for Acting State Director Jim Abbott. Highlights:

- Acting State Director Jim Abbott sends his thanks to each member for contributions to the BLM and our public lands.

National and State Issues:

- **Leadership –**
 - Secretary Salazar and the Department continue to be heavily involved with the response to BP's spill in the Gulf of Mexico.
 - BLM Director Bob Abbey was on a short-term detail as Acting Director of the Minerals Management Service (MMS) to oversee the agency's reorganization. His detail has ended and he is back in his full capacity as BLM Director. Michael

Bromwich has been selected to lead the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement, formerly the MMS.

- Until a new state director is chosen, Jim Abbott will continue to serve as acting state director. Este Stifel, from the BLM Eastern States Office, will continue as acting associate state director through September.
 - The state management team recognizes and thanks Dayne Barron for all his work as Eagle Lake Field Office Manager. Today is his last day and he'll be moving to BLM in Oregon as the Medford District manager. We're happy to welcome Ken Collum as acting field manager behind Dayne. Some of you may know Ken from our Surprise Field Office.
 - We also want to recognize Shane DeForest for his great work as Surprise Field Office manager. Shane will be moving to BLM in Wyoming as manager of the Pinedale Field Office. We're very pleased to welcome Kathy Stangl as Acting Field Manager behind Shane. Kathy was formerly the associate field manager in the Eagle Lake Field Office.
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- **2010 Budget** – We're nearing the end of Fiscal Year 2010 and planning for FY 2011. The President's budget is out and looks good for BLM. President Obama has proposed \$1.1 billion for BLM in FY 2011, an \$8 million increase over last year. It is likely that we won't have an approved budget and we'll be under a "Continuing Resolution" for the rest of the year.
 - **Legislation** – We are now in last few months of the 111th Congress. As for pending legislation, we have about half a dozen proposals – including two in Northern California, Stornetta on the Coast and Chappie-Shasta near Redding.
 - The Stornetta bill reported out by the Committee on Natural Resources in March and on the Union Calendar awaiting House vote. The legislation creates an "outstanding natural area" for about 1,100 acres of public lands near the community of Point Arena in Mendocino County.
 - Chappie-Shasta bill passed the Senate with amendments and sent back to the House. The legislation will transfer management of the entire Chappie-Shasta Off Highway Vehicle area under the management of the BLM Northern District's Redding Field Office. It is currently managed jointly by the BLM and Forest Service. The BLM will transfer management of several parcels of Wilderness in Trinity County to Forest Service Management.
 - **State Priorities:** Our statewide priorities are in tune with the National priorities: 1) renewable energy, 2) the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, 3) Youth initiatives; and 4) the 10th Anniversary of the National Landscape Conservation System.

- **Renewables:** Statewide, we have close to 150 solar and wind applications, covering close to 1.2 million acres, most of that in the Desert. However, our focus is on the California fast track projects: nine solar, three wind and three transmission projects. Here in NorCal, we have about 17 applications for wind projects, 13 in the wind testing stages and 4 in the development stages. Twenty-eight wind applications have been approved, including five in NorCal. The public continues to be involved at every step.
- **ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act)** –BLM-California received \$40 million to fund 115 projects on public lands in California. Most contracts have been let at this point, all with the goal of creating or augmenting jobs by putting boots on the ground. These investments will restore landscapes and habitat, spur renewable energy development remediate abandoned mine lands; and build roads, bridges and trails.
- **The National Landscape Conservation System** is celebrating its 10th Anniversary in 2010. Here in the Northeast, you have a number of Wilderness Study Areas in the System. Statewide, California has more units within the System than any other State. This summer and fall, several events have been held or are planned in California to celebrate the anniversary.
- **America's Great Outdoors** – America's Great Outdoors, the Administration's new initiative, not only includes environmental education, but hiring youth to work on public lands. In addition, a series of "listening sessions" are also being held this summer, including one in Davis on July 7 and another in Los Angeles on July 8.

Approvals

The agenda was approved as presented. The minutes from the June meeting were approved with corrections submitted by Alturas Field Manager Tim Burke.

Wild Horse and Burro strategy

The RAC subcommittee provided its comments on the proposal offered by BLM that will lead to development of a report to be presented to Congress in the fall. The BLM is developing a strategy to move the program in a new direction, implementing Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's vision for the program.

During the course of this discussion, the RAC made several recommendations. They are noted in italic type.

Following is the subcommittee recommendation, with comments from the full RAC noted in bold:

June 30, 2010

BLM Northeast California Resource Advisory Council subcommittee recommendations on BLM proposed wild horse and burro management strategy:

The subcommittee (Nancy Huffman, Alan Cain, Sean Curtis and Todd Swickard) met in Susanville, and recommended the following to the full RAC in its consideration of BLM's proposed strategy for management of the Wild Horse and Burro Program:

Wild Horse Preserves

- *The BLM should focus on developing preserves for wild horses removed from herd management areas on existing federal land before purchasing private land (objective 5).*
- *BLM should mitigate economic impacts to local governments and communities that would occur if livestock grazing permits were converted to wild horse and burro use. **This provision should remain even if the permit transfer provision is retained.***
- ***If there is a permit conversion the BLM should fully analyze the environmental and economic impacts.***
- *Objective 8: All should be done in existing wild herds. Consider moving this to the communication or science/research section.*

Sustainable Herds

- *The RAC agrees with Goal 1 as stated.*
- ***The objective should be removed completely.** Objective 7: Do not create new reproducing herds unless populations can be controlled.*
- *Objective 7: Creating preserves will require intensive, independent analysis and significant funding.*
- *Objective 7: The RAC supports longer contracts and the education concept.*

Treasured Herds

- *The RAC subcommittee questions the need for creating new treasured herds. The public already views some herds (Kigers, for example) as "treasured" and treats them that way. There is concern that BLM field offices could be directed to identify treasured herds.*
- *BLM already has the ability to carry out all management actions identified in the section.*

Private Care

- *Emphasize education.*
- *Move the rest of the objectives to the communication section.*
- *Keep action 7 under objective 3.*

Communications

- Define “support to partners.” Does this mean funding, staff time, other?

Animal Welfare

- The RAC supports creation of a Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program as set forth in the proposal. **(The full RAC did not agree with this position and did not forward it).**
- On each gather, the BLM should work with the public and the contractor to develop a reasonable public access protocol.
- The section should reference selective removal (structured herd management) approaches to wild herd management.

Subcommittee members noted:

Alan Cain: The key to wild horse and burro management on the range is slowing down on the range population growth. Interest groups have shared concerns with the accuracy of herd population data, and use of helicopters in gathers. There is no way to gather large numbers of horses without using helicopters.

Todd Swickard: Limiting reproduction should be a concept that we strongly support. The RAC should support the BLM gather plans for Twin Peaks as a necessary tool until technology is available to effectively slow population growth. Establishing treasured herds as proposed by the Secretary would cause attention on other uses to be diminished by the BLM.

Sean Curtis: The RAC provide some overall comments about wild horse management. The bottom line should be maintaining the health of the public lands. This review exercise was less than productive because the document was a “laundry list” of all possible actions. There did not appear to be much thought put into the document. The document presented should have been more refined. The horse activists at the last meeting will not agree that horse management is not an exact science. There may be room for discussion with them on the issue of on the range populations. None of the actions can be achieved without population control. There is a question about whether the public will support creating non-reproducing sanctuaries in the east. People want to see babies when they view horse herds.

Recommendation: if major changes to the program are directed administratively or Congressionally, there should be full NEPA analysis. The Secretary should work to ensure that there is full analysis for any program changes

Rosalee agreed that population control is the most important aspect of wild horse and burro management. Nancy added that the BLM will never be able to implement structured herd management until on the range populations are controlled.

Nancy noted that the subcommittee objected to Objective 2, Sustainable Herds in the BLM proposal. It should be part of the Preserve section. Discussion continued.

Gale suggested that AUMs for wildlife need to be considered.

Martin Balding said he cannot support increasing horse populations. The government must implement procedures to control populations despite the emotion associated with the issue. The RAC should be adamant about the need for population control. He finds it unfortunate that the BLM cannot use all the provisions of the Wild Horses and Burros Act, including humane euthanasia. Sean suggested a RAC recommendation that populations should be set at a finite level for HMAs. Frank suggested an umbrella statement focused on rangeland health and the need to conserve other resource values including wildlife and cultural resources. There should be recognition of the need to balance multiple interests.

Recommendation: The RAC does not support increasing the number of wild horses on public rangelands. It supports the need to balance for multiple uses, maintaining healthy lands and natural resources

Sean suggested the BLM needs the ability to move gathers across HMAs if there is evidence that animals are moving from one HMA to another.

Public Comments

Cindy Rush, Janesville: Questioned the fertility treatment for horses released to the wild. She suggested reducing the number of stallions further than the 60/40 ratio and considering gelding stallions returned to the range.

Nancy: Funds should be spent on reducing herds and limiting population growth should be the priority over finding new preserves. Everything should be done to limit the herds.

Recommendation: Under the Preserves Section: No preserves should be created until the long term holding program has shown that it has reached capacity. If there is a sustainable population on the range, the need to hold excess horses is temporary and can be accommodated by private citizens willing to contract for long term holding.

Recommendation: caring for wild horses in long term holding should not be funded from the wild horse and burro budget for on the range management. The cost should be shown separately.

Recommendation: The BLM should reconsider ownership status of wild horses and burros once they transfer to long term holding,

Gale provided a copy of a national wildlife federation resolution on wild horse and burro management: and asked that it be included in the meeting record.

Sean noted that organizations such as the NWF need to step forward to support BLM when gathers are proposed. He noted that the state wildlife agencies have been absent in supporting the Twin Peaks proposal, for example.

Recommendation: The RAC supports the sentiment expressed in the following Fish and Wildlife Federation recommendation:

Management of Feral Horses and Burros

Friday, April 9, 2010

Management of Feral Horses and Burros

WHEREAS, the provisions of the Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, its amendments, and conditions imposed on yearly appropriations by Congress have resulted in excessive numbers of feral horses and burros on western rangelands; and

WHEREAS, a large portion of these rangelands have experienced wildfire, drought or near drought conditions in the recent years and climate forecasts offer little hope for relief; and

WHEREAS, wildlife numbers have decreased because of poor range conditions; and

WHEREAS, the population of feral horses and burros has increased far above appropriate management levels causing serious damage to riparian areas in particular and an increased rate of deterioration of rangeland health in general;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation, at its annual meeting assembled April 8-10, 2010, in Houston, Texas, hereby urges Congress to appropriate adequate funds for the federal agencies with responsibilities of public land management to implement plans that address the problem outlined above; and that these plans shall include: (a) a complete survey of feral horse and burro populations on public lands; (b) an immediate effort to reduce feral horse and burro populations to the low range of appropriate management levels; (c) managing all herds of captive unadoptable feral horses and burros to be non-reproducing; and (d) the use of multiple population control methods endorsed by professional wildlife managers on feral horse and burro herds to reduce populations to manageable levels; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the appropriate federal agencies be required to document and file a bi-annual report to Congress on the impacts and damage on public lands and wildlife caused by feral horses and burros.

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Recommendation: The Treasured Herds concept should be eliminated. It is superfluous and complicating and detracts from the focus on population control.

Recommendation: The RAC wants animals cared for humanely but opposes the concept of creating a new animal welfare program. Replace the phrase CAWP, or concept of creating a new program, with language directing development of procedures to ensure animal welfare and use of best practices for ensuring animal welfare, the concept of ensuring animal welfare should extend to the range. Land health conditions should ensure animal health and welfare. In light of the above, the RAC does not agree with the actions presented.

The RAC agreed unanimously that its recommendation from today's meeting be assembled into a single document, with the following preamble:

The Northeast California Resource Advisory Council supports the BLM's stated objective of moving the Wild Horse and Burro Program onto a sustainable course. The RAC strongly believes that the program, like all others in the BLM, must be built upon the concept of managing for healthy public lands and balanced uses. Controlling wild horse and burro populations at sustainable levels by controlling herd reproduction should be the primary focus of the program and the most important objective. The RAC comments and recommendations below support this position.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be October 28 and 29, 2010, with a field trip on the first day to the Hatchet Ridge wind energy project. Agenda topics: Report on Twin Peaks gather, Sage steppe update, Ruby Pipeline Update, status reports on the Treasured Landscapes (National Monument) discussions underway in the Department, consider sending a recommendation on the above.